

bit of misdirection of its own. For example, last week the Wall Street Journal reported that the Republican Party has a newly adopted campaign strategy to defeat Senate Democrats. They are going to attack me because their attacks and fabrications regarding the Affordable Care Act have borne little fruit.

In Senate races across the country, Republicans will avoid the issues that matter most to Americans and instead will try to focus attention on a Senator who is not even up for election—and that Senator is me.

What are those issues that Republicans so desperately want to avoid? How about immigration? That bill was introduced a year ago, and it passed the Senate many months ago. It is a good piece of legislation and the vast majority of the American people think it is a good idea. Yet instead of explaining to the American people why this bipartisan bill sits idle in the Republican-controlled House of Representatives, they want to change the subject.

The Speaker of the House of Representatives refuses to allow a vote. If a vote were allowed to occur, it would pass overwhelmingly. It is a good piece of legislation. Not only is it fair and equitable, but it would also reduce the debt by \$1 trillion.

While struggling American families plead to Congress for help in providing work or getting paid fair, livable wages, House Republicans prefer to talk about anything other than what is relevant? Why? Because their billionaire sugar daddies are not interested in helping middle-class Americans.

Charles and David Koch are not concerned with the long-term unemployed families, and so the Republicans they sponsor in the House of Representatives are content to do nothing. These billionaire oil barons don't care that working women are being deprived of fair wages.

My daughter—or the Presiding Officer's wife—can do the exact same work as a man but only get 77 cents while the man gets paid \$1. We want to change that. The Koch-driven Republican Congress refuses even to allow us to have a vote on it. They have started filibusters here in the Senate time and time again on this issue, and they will not bring this matter to a vote in the House either.

As the Senate turns its attention to increasing the Federal minimum wage, which we moved to earlier today, is there any question as to whether Republicans will once again do the Koch brothers' bidding? Of course not. They are not going to give millions of Americans a fair shot at earning a decent wage.

Eighty billion dollars is not enough for these two brothers. Evidently the Kochs think that \$10.10 is too much for a hard-working American with a family to take care of. If a person works 40 hours at \$10.10, you just hit the magic spot where you are no longer in pov-

erty. They refuse to allow millions of Americans the opportunity to get out of poverty and to give millions of Americans a raise.

The Republicans in Congress yawn at the idea of giving the American middle class a fair shot at financial stability and instead have chosen to distract the American people by attacking me. Like all illusions, they are using misdirection to call the American people's attention away from reality and attempting to buy America with their billions.

The Koch brothers and their accomplices continue to put millions upon millions of dollars into attacking anyone and anything that stands in their way of getting richer—and already rich they are.

Senate Democrats refuse to stand idly by while two megarich individuals attempt to create an American oligarchy.

I have spoken on the Senate floor against the Koch brothers' attempts to rig the system in their favor because it comes at the expense of families in Nevada and families across this great country. In response, one of the Kochs' puppet organizations announced its plans to run ads against me in the State of Nevada.

I am not running for anything for a few more years. As I said before, being the target of a couple of rich billionaires is not going to intimidate me.

Shockingly, the leadership of the Republican Party has decided to follow suit with their new campaign strategy. It is obvious their previous strategy of attacking ObamaCare has proven to be a miserable failure. Over 8 million Americans have chosen the coverage of the Affordable Care Act, plus 3 million more who are on their parents' insurance because of the Affordable Care Act. Up to 6 million people are on their way to having health care because of Medicaid, which is also as part of ObamaCare.

For example, in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, 413,000 people have already signed up for the State-sponsored health care they have in Kentucky. So with one failed strategy behind them, Republicans and their benefactors are trying something new, but it is still the same smoke-and-mirrors routine they tried in the past. Divert and obstruct is what they do.

To those Republicans who would rather bash me than speak out about what matters most important to their constituents, I say fire away.

To Charles and David Koch and their radical henchmen, feel free to attack me as much as you want. I can take it. Don't expect the American people to be fooled by this newest slight of hand strike. Ultimately voters will see the new tactic for what it is—a distraction that is keeping American families from getting a fair shot at financial stability.

In the meantime Senate Democrats will continue to speak against the shadowy influence of two power-drunk

billionaires and their devoted followers on Capitol Hill.

Most importantly, Senate Democrats will continue working on meaningful legislation that will get our Nation's middle class back on track.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

Will the Chair announce the business of the day.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 5:30 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders and their designees.

Mr. REID. I note the absence of a quorum and ask to have the time charged equally against both the majority and minority.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KING). Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO MAREN SANCHEZ

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, in just a couple of hours in Milford, CT, at 7 p.m. this evening there will be a vigil that will bring together many different members of the Milford community to celebrate, mourn, and grieve the life of a beautiful young woman who suffered a senseless and brutal death last Friday morning. In this inexplicable act of violence, she was killed by a fellow classmate shortly after 7 in the morning.

Jonathan Law High School was turned into a crime scene as members of the emergency responder team—first the police and then the medics—sought to save her life. Tragically and unfortunately, they were unable to do so. The evening that was to be their junior prom instead became a vigil.

We will perhaps never know what prompted this horrific and unimaginable act of brutality. This horrific event has united and brought together people who are now mourning Maren's death.

We know with certainty what a wonderful human being Maren Sanchez was, and we also know this community has shown strength and courage by coming together and uniting to help each other—particularly those students who knew her. We also know with certainty how gifted, talented, compassionate, and caring she was as

the manager of sports teams, a gifted singer, an athlete, school president, and an honor student. Her whole future was ahead of her. Most remarkably, she was a person of consummate caring and compassion for her fellow students. Those students struggle today to make some sense of this violence, to derive some meaning and maybe some comfort.

I went to Jonathan Law High School yesterday for part of the afternoon and spoke with Chief of Police Keith Mello, whose men and women have helped the community so deeply; the mayor of Milford Ben Blake, who has demonstrated leadership in this crisis; the superintendent of schools and principal of Jonathan Law High School; and the many teachers and parents and students and the grief counselors and therapists who came to speak with those students and help them to think and live through this horrible tragedy.

What is remarkable and so impressed me yesterday was the love and caring that people from disparate parts of this community showed for each other and continue to show in this testing time. This is a time of extraordinary adversity and tragedy. People who might otherwise be strangers are drawn together by the thread of grief and will reform the fabric of a community by simple acts of caring. They are united today in their grief and bewilderment. They are seeking to honor Maren's legacy and sustain it with the very qualities of courage, strength, caring, and compassion she demonstrated throughout her life. Those qualities of caring, compassion, courage, and strength will see them through this tragedy as they come together for the vigil tonight.

We can all honor the legacy of this remarkable young woman by looking for ways to make the world better, as she sought to do, and filling it with song and color, the lust for life, and the joy and pride in her contemporary accomplishments.

We need to search for steps we can take to make our schools better and safer. The time to talk about policy or steps to better school safety will come, and I hope we will all be a part of that continuing effort in exploring how to protect anyone and everyone who comes to school, which should be a haven of safety and insulated from violence—particularly against the most vulnerable members of our community. But those policy responses can wait until after the days of grief and mourning have passed as we celebrate this remarkable young life. She was described by members of her class as an angel. Her cousin Edward Kovac said on Friday:

Maren should be celebrating at her prom this evening with her friends and classmates. Instead, we are mourning her death and we are trying to understand this senseless loss of life.

He said:

She was a bright light full of hope and dreams. In fact, she was among the brightest of lights, full of the most wondrous hopes and dreams.

So today my heart and prayers are with her family, her friends, the Milford community, as they gather for this vigil tonight. Separated by distance, I will be with them in spirit, as I know my colleagues who know of this tragedy will be as well. This kind of tragedy is indecipherable, incomprehensible to young men and women—16-year-olds—but equally so to all of us of any age. My hope is that we will honor Maren Sanchez's legacy, that our hearts and prayers will go to her family, her parents, and all who knew her and all who would like to have known her because she was such a remarkable and wonderful human being.

Thank you. I yield the floor and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 20 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, we are told that this week, on Wednesday, we are going to have a vote on the so-called minimum wage, the so-called 40-percent increase in the minimum wage. This is part of a jobs plan by my friends on the Democratic side. Now, it is not a plan that is intended to pass anything, and that was revealed in a New York Times article by my distinguished friend from New York, Senator SCHUMER, who may be an architect of this. It is to highlight political differences, which is a fair thing to do in the Senate. But lest anyone think that someone is trying to pass a law here, they should not be confused by that.

We have had three hearings on the minimum wage in the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, of which I am the ranking Republican member. We have had time to have those three hearings, but the chairman of the committee, the Senator from Iowa, has said we do not have time to markup the bill in committee or consider any amendments to this idea with better proposals to create jobs. It was reported in one of the Hill newspapers that somebody said: Well, why don't you have time for amendments on the minimum wage, and he said: Well, there might be embarrassing amendments. I think there probably would be votes on embarrassing amendments—embarrassing only if you voted against them.

So let me talk a little bit about this proposal by my Democratic friends to create jobs by raising the minimum wage.

Now, they are on the right issue. The issue is jobs. We have been home in

Maine and Tennessee and around the country, and too many people are having a hard time finding a job. Too many people have been out of work for more than 6 months. We call them the long-term unemployed. Mr. President, 10.5 million people are unemployed right now. Unemployed Americans have been out of work an average of 9 months. That is beyond the time for unemployment compensation, on the average.

It is hard to find a job. It is hard to create a job. It is especially tough on people in their forties and fifties and sixties.

Family incomes are lower than we would like for them to be. The critical problem is, there are too few jobs, especially for low-wage workers. Then, we saw a report this morning that said that most of the jobs created since 2008 have been lower-wage jobs rather than higher-wage jobs.

So the issue is right. It is jobs. The American people want it to be easier to find a good-paying job. The Democratic proposal we are going to vote on this week as a solution to the jobs problem is a proposal that will eliminate 500,000 jobs. Now, let me say that again in case anyone thought I misread my page of notes. We are talking about jobs, and the Democratic proposal—this is the big deal this week. We are not going to do anything in the Senate this week of any significance on the floor, so far as I know—a few nominations—except have a procedural vote Wednesday on the minimum wage proposal, and the Democratic proposal to make it easier to find a job is to eliminate 500,000 jobs.

In case you think I am making this up, let me quote where I got this piece of information. This is from the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office. The Congressional Budget Office is something we set up by law because we will make our Republican points and we will make our Democratic points, and we may shade it a little bit this way or a little bit that way. So we say to the CBO: You tell us the truth as best as you can tell. They are non-partisan. We do not always like what they say. This is what they said about the Democratic proposal to create more jobs:

Once fully implemented in the second half of 2016, the \$10.10 option [to raise the minimum wage] would reduce total employment by about 500,000 workers, or .3 percent. . . .

That is according to the Congressional Budget Office.

Should we believe the Congressional Budget Office?

Senator HELLER, the distinguished Senator from Nevada, asked Janet Yellen, President Obama's recently confirmed head of the Federal Reserve Board, what her thoughts on the CBO study and the impact of raising the minimum wage would be. This is what she said. I quote President Obama's new Fed chief, Janet Yellen:

The CBO is as qualified as anyone to evaluate that literature.